

BOOKS | AUTHOR SERIES

Slow cooking led to fast success



photos by Nellie Doneva/Reporter-News People line up to sample a recipe by the featured authors at the Texas Author Series: The Crockin' Girls at the main branch of the Abilene Public Library Monday, April 25, 2016.

By Loretta Fulton, Special to the Reporter-News

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The authors of two successful cookbooks served up the perfect recipe Monday for a noontime address — toss in a good portion of humor, stir in a sprinkling of examples, and let it simmer for an hour.

Oh, and be sure to serve samples from the cookbook as the address unfolds. That recipe turned into an enjoyable luncheon presentation and earned a "well done" from the audience.

Monday was the last of four presentations of the annual Texas Author

Series held at the Abilene Public Library. Nicole Sparks and Jenna Marwitz of Early, better known as "The Crockin' Girls," talked about their experiences with publishing two cookbooks filled with slow cooker recipes, "The Crockin' Girls' Slow Cookin' Companion," published in 2012, and "It's Our Crockin' Life," which came out last fall.

While they talked, guests dined on "Hubby's Fave Enchilada Soup," prepared by Cathy Lauve, Becky Colman and Martha Magee. The recipe, found on page 47 of "It's Our Crockin' Life" proved to be a "fave" of the audience, too.

Nobody was more surprised than Sparks and Marwitz with the success of a Facebook page they created in 2011 to share slow cooker recipes with about 30 mothers of young children who needed quick recipes to fill hungry mouths.

"Overnight, we had multiplied into over a million followers on Facebook," Marwitz said.

Before long, they were getting the same request over and over: "Please put together a book." So, a cookbook was published in time for Mother's Day 2012. To prepare enough recipes for a cookbook, the two women, plus some professional and volunteer help, pulled off a three-day crock-a-thon.

"We're crazy," Sparks conceded.

The book publishing process came with challenges that the two women weren't expecting, such as what recipes to include, how they would dress for photo shoots, even what size font the type would be. The publisher wanted a smaller font, the cooks wanted a larger one for easier reading when preparing recipes.

"We had to learn a lot about standing our ground," Marwitz said.

Even though the first cookbook was successful, Sparks and Marwitz

decided to self-publish the second edition and schedule their own book signing tours.

The overnight success of the slow cooker recipes didn't come without some stress. Both women are married and the mother of young children. They found their normal routines turned topsy-turvy by their new fame and had to think about it before deciding to publish a second cookbook.

But when someone in the audience asked, "Would you do it again?" they didn't hesitate.

"Yes!" they both responded.

The Crockin' Girls

Nicole Sparks and Jenna Marwitz of Early, "The Crockin' Girls," are the authors of two cookbooks of recipes for slow cookers, "The Crockin' Girls Slow Cookin' Companion" and "It's Our Crockin' Life." Both books are available at Texas Star Trading Co., 174 Cypress St. For more information, go to www.crockingirls.com.

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